

## **How to Handle Criticism**

There are specific guidelines for handling criticism when it is directed to you and when you must criticize others.

### **When You Are Criticized**

If the criticism is deserved (that is, did you really make a mistake?) or undeserved (that is, you were not working the shift when the error was made), you follow practically the same procedure.

1.    **Listen very carefully to the suggestions being made.** Do not interrupt or answer until the person doing the criticizing has stopped talking. Bite your lips if necessary. Do not try to deny. Don't say "but," "wait a minute," or "no." Just keep quiet.
2.    **Ask polite, reasonable questions** if necessary to clarify the error on the suggestion being offered. It is not necessary to be rude or to raise your voice. Keep calm. Do not offer excuses. Just give any facts needed, but usually stick to questions about how you can correct the error. (If the criticism is undeserved, lead your accuser through your questions to the fact that you are being unfairly criticized.)
3.    **Offer to correct the error if possible.** Make an effort to follow the suggestions. (If the criticism is undeserved, accept the apology of the accuser, but do not expect one or demand one. Some people, maybe like you, have trouble apologizing.)
4.    **Thank the person giving the criticism.** Be sincere; this is a chance to make yourself a better employee. (If the criticism is undeserved, say, "Thank you for your time. I hope I have helped you to straighten out the situation.")
5.    **Return to your workplace and keep your mouth shut** about the incident.

No matter where we work, we will be criticized at some time. Criticism is a part of living; sometimes we have to take it and sometimes we have to give it. Either way criticism can be constructive if we let it. Criticism is a form of self-improvement. There are various negative reactions to criticism which we should avoid but which we should understand that many people will automatically use.

1.    Aggression—arguing with the speaker or blaming someone else.
2.    Withdrawal—being afraid to respond or tuning out the speaker and dwelling on your own insecure feelings.

## Module 9 v Activity 11 v COOPERATION

### When You Do The Criticizing

1. **Praise others regularly.** If others know that you respect them and their work, they will be more receptive to your requests for change and improvement.
2. **Be positive.** Avoid saying, "You didn't mail the package when I told you to." Say, "The top priority package wasn't mailed on time." Focus on future improvements, not past failures.
3. **Be concrete.** Name the specific area in which improvement is needed and give suggestions about how the improvements should or must be made.
4. **Avoid attacking** a person's characteristics or personality. State only what specific incident or situation needs adjustment and how that adjustment should be made. Avoid the pronoun *you* whenever possible. Focus on the situation and how it can be improved in the future.
5. **Be considerate.** Choose an appropriate time and place for criticism. Do not criticize in front of others. Avoid criticizing on the person's birthday, just before vacation or the end of the workday, or when the person isn't feeling well.

All people make mistakes; criticism is one way to learn from them. These guidelines also work in personal relationships.